Work Plan

FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

(In accordance with Article 2.6 of the Bilateral Fund Agreement and Article 4.9 of the Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2021-2028)

BF work plan Slovakia 2021-2028

(Version 1.0 adopted on 11.02.2026 by Joint Committee on Bilateral Fund)

1. Objective and priorities

Enhanced cooperation and improved mutual knowledge and understanding between Donor and Beneficiary States.

Please state the bilateral objective and outline any priorities identified by the Joint Committee for the Bilateral Fund. Priorities could be e.g. key areas or upcoming large events.

1.1. State of play

Bilateral relations between Slovakia and the Donor States (Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein) are well-established, friendly, and functional, with a solid basis for further collaboration. In the third programme period (2014-2021) 110 bilateral initiatives (hereinafter referred to as "the Projects") were supported covering sectors such as education, research, culture, innovation, social issues, and energy.

Cooperation takes place at multiple levels – political, institutional, professional – but there remains a need to foster more systematic approach and long-term, sustainable partnerships that go beyond projects. Building on this strong foundation, the Fund for Bilateral Relations at national level (hereinafter referred to as "the Bilateral Fund") aims to further develop and strengthen these partnerships, fostering sustainable and long-term cooperation that benefits both Slovakia and the Donor States.

1.2. Strategic Objective and Vision

The main objective has been defined as: **"Strengthened bilateral relations through building resiliency, trust, mutual understanding and partnerships between Donor States and Beneficiary State."**

The overarching objective of the Bilateral Fund is to strengthen and expand bilateral cooperation between Slovakia and the Donor States. The Bilateral Fund seeks to support projects that create lasting connections between organizations and individuals, reinforce mutual understanding, and promote sustainable partnerships. By facilitating knowledge exchange, mentoring, capacity-building, and joint problem-solving, the Bilateral Fund contributes to the long-term strategic vision of fostering trust, high-quality cooperation, and increased visibility of bilateral relations.

The Bilateral Fund shall be thematically focused and preferably provide support in areas other than those covered by EEA & Norway Grants Programmes (Culture, Green Transition and Social).

Strategic focus shall be put on areas such as **international security**, **cooperation in international institutions** and **building resilient institutions and society**. This Work Plan shall allocate approximately 60% of the allocation of the Bilateral Fund to Calls and predefined Projects, bearing in mind that the current geopolitical situation is unstable and unpredictable. Revision shall take place by the end of 2027 at the latest.

1.3. Goals and Expected Results

The Bilateral Fund serves as an instrument to encourage cooperation across different sectors and support projects that respond to current geopolitical challenges, bring added value to both sides, build sustainable partnerships, develop joint solutions to common challenges, and increase the visibility of bilateral cooperation.

The Bilateral Fund focuses on achieving these outcomes and outputs:

Outcome 1: Resilient consular, humanitarian & crisis cooperation

Output: Work with international partners to align standards, run regular joint exercises, and share reliable information - so our cooperation can run smoothly in time of crises.

Outcome 2: Efficient international cooperation mainly in the defence and justice sectors

Output: Make international cooperation faster and fully lawful: clear points of contact, compatible procedures, and well-trained practitioners.

Outcome 3: Strengthened social cohesion, resilience and equality

Output: A society less vulnerable to today's threats - with reliable information in the public space, fair and trusted rules, respectful debate, and the ability to adapt together as circumstances evolve.

Outcome 4: Strengthened cooperation in innovation and knowledge-sharing, including in the area of research-park management

Output: Enhance governance of research and science parks - professionalised management, ethical and open practices, and pathways that translate research into public-interest innovation.

In case of need, the revision of the outcomes and outputs may be discussed and agreed upon by the JCBF.

2. Implementation system

Please include a brief description of the implementation system for the Bilateral Fund. The modalities for allocating funds should be outlined, e.g.calls, pre-defined activities, activities carried out by the NFP.

The National Focal Point is responsible for the overall management of the Bilateral Fund. The National Focal Point carries out this role in close cooperation with the Joint Committee for the Bilateral Fund (hereinafter referred to as "Joint Committee").

Decisions on all predefined Projects supported by the Bilateral Fund are taken by the Joint Committee. Following such decisions, the Work Plan is updated accordingly to ensure that it reflects the current and planned activities of the Bilateral Fund.

Calls are drafted by the National Focal Point and approved by the Joint Committee.

Following the decisions on the Calls and predefined Projects, the Work Plan is updated accordingly.

2.1. Allocation

The total allocation of the Bilateral Fund is EUR 2,800,000. This version of the Work Plan allocates **EUR 1,600,000** to:

1. **Predefined Projects** (EUR 800,000)

2. **Calls** (EUR 800,000).

If relevant, the allocated amount may be adjusted.

The remaining unallocated reserve of EUR 1,200,000 may be allocated during the next revision of the Work Plan or when deemed relevant by the JCBF members.

2.2. Approach and expected activities

Predefined Projects can be prepared by a promoter and at least one partner under **any of the four outcomes** and submitted directly to the National Focal Point or to one of the other Joint Committee members and presented to the Joint Committee for decision.

Calls shall be thematic and launched by the National Focal Point following Joint Committee's approval under **Outcome 3** (**resilient society**) and **Outcome 4 (research management)**.

Expected activities supported under the Projects include:

- Activity related to the future cooperation in the area of "Future-Proofing the Digital Society: Strategic Foresight on the Societal Impact of Disinformation", in cooperation with the University of Liechtenstein. The activity has been agreed in the Bilateral Fund Agreement and shall be carried out as a predefined Project under the Outcome 3.
- Activity related to the continuation of cooperation between Bodø 2024 and the City of Trenčín within the framework of the European Capitals of Culture cooperation. The activity has been agreed in the Bilateral Fund Agreement and shall be carried out as a predefined Project under the Outcome 3.
- Activity related to the support for cooperation between science and technology parks and institutions in Slovakia and Donor States. The activity has been agreed in the Bilateral Fund Agreement and shall be carried out as a Call under the Outcome 4.

Every Project must include active participation of both Slovak and Donor States entities.

Mechanisms to ensure flexible bilateral funding and the principle of proportionality will be applied at all levels. The Work Plan may be updated at any time to incorporate new Projects approved by the Joint Committee or to record formal changes. The commenting and approval procedures within the Joint Committee follow the NFP Guidance on the Implementation of the Bilateral Fund, ensuring that members are duly consulted while allowing for efficient decision-making.

2.3. Applicants and financing

Eligibility of applicants

Only Slovak entities and Donor State entities are eligible as promoters of the Project (hereinafter referred to as „the Project Promoter“). Each Project shall include at least one entity from Slovakia and at least one entity from a Donor State as Project Promoter or Project Partner.

Provided the conditions above are fulfilled, International Organisations within the meaning of the Regulation and entities established in any of the Beneficiary State of the Financial Mechanism in question are eligible as Project Partners.

Eligibility of Project Promoters and Project Partner may further be limited in the Call or in the description text for the predefined projects.

Institutions represented in the Joint Committee can participate in a predefined Project.

Financing

No co-financing is required.

The grant requested shall not be lower than **EUR 20,000**. Each Project Promoter and Project Partner must be allocated at least **EUR 10,000**.

Generally, payments are provided as **advance payments up to 20%** of the Grant amount, while reimbursement of already incurred costs and extraordinary payments are also possible.

Grants take form of eligible costs actually incurred. In addition, travel costs shall be calculated as unit costs and indirect costs at a flat rate, as specified below.

Travel costs, calculated as Unit Costs

The **National Focal Point** shall apply the methodology set out in **Commission Decision C(2024) 5405** amending Commission Decision **C(2021) 35**, authorising the use of **unit costs** for travel, accommodation and subsistence within an action or work programme under the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.

The National Focal Point shall apply this methodology **in full** and for **all types of travel-related costs and allowances**, specifically for calculating the eligible amount of Unit Costs for:

- air travel;
- domestic ground transport;
- accommodation;
- subsistence and related expenses.

In the event the methodology is amended, the National Focal Point shall reflect the amended methodology in the **implementation rules** at the next update. The use of Unit Costs does **not** preclude the **Beneficiary** and the **Project Partner** from claiming **Eligible Expenditures** in an amount **lower** than the applicable Unit Costs.

Indirect Costs

Where stipulated in the relevant **Call** , a **Flat Rate** shall be applied pursuant to **Article 8.5.1(b) of the Regulations**, i.e. **Indirect costs** shall be reported **mandatorily** at a single rate of **15%** of **direct eligible staff costs**.

In duly justified cases, the National Focal Point may make use or limit the use of Simplified Costs Options, especially in predefined Projects.

2.4. Principles of selection and assessment

Predefined Projects are to be approved by the Joint Committee by consensus. Further details are listed in the NFP Guidance on the Implementation of the Bilateral Fund.

3. Donor Shares and Donor Priorities

Please include the individual Donor shares (in Euros) and any priorities indicated by the Donors.

Donor priorities

Following discussions with the Donor States, several priorities have been identified. In addition, human rights and democracy, gender equality and social inclusion, fostering cooperation between civil society NGOs/CSOs and public institutions and supporting regional-level institutions will be considered within all Outcomes. Additionally, proposals for projects aimed at enhancing business cooperation should be considered. Gender equality is a core value in the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants and shall be integrated throughout all programmes and funds, both as a guiding principle and through targeted activities, where relevant.

Donor shares

The National Focal Point ensures that the allocation of Bilateral Fund respects both the financial contributions of the Donors and their thematic priorities of the Bilateral Fund. In case the share of the Donor State is reached, no further Projects (predefined or from the Call) can be approved.

According to the Bilateral Guideline, the budget will be split into three separate amounts for strengthening bilateral relations with each of the three Donor States.

The share of the Bilateral Fund corresponding to the objective of strengthening relations with each individual Donor State will generally support Projects involving a Donor partner or promoter from that Donor State.

It is possible that a Project involves entities from more than one Donor State. In that case, the budget can be split between the relevant Donors or counted towards one of them. These arrangements are made between the Donors.

The Donor shares are as follows:

Iceland: EUR 79,515 (from the EEA FM)

Liechtenstein: EUR 105,000 (from the EEA FM)

Norway: EUR 1,315,485 (from the EEA FM) and EUR 1,300,000 (from the NFM)

4. Open calls

Title	JCBF approval date	Amount available	Applications received	Total grant applied for	Applications approved for funding	Total grant awarded

5. Predefined bilateral initiatives

Title	Small initiatives
Grant awarded from Bilateral fund	
Amount incurred	

5. Activities carried out by the NFP

Title	Small initiatives
Grant awarded from Bilateral fund	
Amount incurred	

6. Summary

Please note that this budget follows the structure of the IFR template.

Title	Budget	Comments
Activities carried out by the NFP	€ 0	
Pre-defined activities (total budget for planned pre-defined activities at national level)	€ 0	
Funds still to be allocated	€ 2,800,000	
Total	**€ 2,800,000**	